

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

1-32. (Cancelled)

33. (Currently Amended) A method of loading a filter into a delivery sheath adapted for use in delivering the filter within the vasculature of a patient, the delivery sheath having a proximal end, a distal end, and a lumen extending through at least a portion of the distal end, the distal end of the delivery sheath having an exterior surface, comprising the steps of:

providing a loading tool having a proximal end, a distal end, and a lumen extending therethrough, and further comprising a first inside diameter region proximate the distal end thereof and a second inside diameter region proximate the proximal end thereof;

providing a filter longitudinally fixed on a guidewire, the guidewire having proximal and distal portions, the filter connected to the distal portion;

removing the filter, loading tool and delivery sheath from sterile packaging;

coupling the loading tool to the ~~distal end of the~~ delivery sheath, wherein the step of coupling the loading tool to the delivery sheath is accomplished by fitting the loading tool over the exterior surface of the delivery sheath;

inserting the proximal end of the guidewire into the lumen of the loading tool and, pulling the guidewire, causing the filter to move toward the proximal end of the loading tool and shift from an expanded configuration within the lumen of the loading tool to a collapsed configuration; and

pulling the filter within the lumen of the delivery sheath.

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 33, wherein the loading tool is coupled to the delivery sheath by a friction fit over the exterior surface of the delivery sheath.

36-37. (Cancelled)

38. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 33, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the first outside diameter region is greater than the inside diameter of the loading tool at the second outside diameter region.

39. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 38, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the first outside diameter region is about 0.080 to 0.100 inches.

40. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 38, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the second outside diameter region is about 0.043 to 0.080 inches.

41. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 33, wherein the loading tool further comprises a notched region and a third inside diameter region.

42. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the delivery sheath further comprises an outside diameter and an inside diameter.

43. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 42, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the third inside diameter region and the outside diameter of the delivery sheath are substantially equal.

44. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 42, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the second inside diameter region and the inside diameter of the delivery sheath are substantially equal.

45. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 33, further comprising the step of uncoupling the loading tool from the delivery sheath.

46. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 45, wherein the step of uncoupling the loading tool from the delivery sheath results in the filter being appropriately prepared for entry into a blood vessel.

47. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 33, wherein the filter is configured to be disposed within the distal end of the loading tool lumen in an expanded position.

48. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 33, wherein the step of pulling the filter toward the proximal end of the loading tool is performed after the step of coupling the loading tool to the delivery sheath.

49. (Currently Amended) A method of loading a filter into a delivery sheath adapted for use in delivering the filter within the vasculature of a patient, the delivery sheath having a proximal end, a distal end, and a lumen extending through at least a portion of the distal end, the distal end of the delivery sheath having an exterior surface, comprising the steps of:

providing a loading tool having a proximal end, a distal end, and a lumen extending therethrough, and further comprising a first inside diameter region proximate the distal end thereof and a second inside diameter region proximate the proximal end thereof;

providing a filter longitudinally fixed on a guidewire, the guidewire having proximal and distal ends, the filter connected to the distal end;

coupling the loading tool to the ~~distal end of the~~ delivery sheath by fitting the loading tool over the exterior surface of the delivery sheath;

inserting the proximal end of the guidewire into the lumen of the loading tool and, pulling the guidewire, causing the filter to move toward the proximal end of the loading

tool and shift from an expanded configuration within the lumen of the loading tool to a collapsed configuration; and

pulling the filter within the lumen of the delivery sheath.

50. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 49, wherein the loading tool is coupled to the delivery sheath by a friction fit over the exterior surface of the delivery sheath.

51-52. (Cancelled)

53. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 49, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the first outside diameter region is greater than the inside diameter of the loading tool at the second outside diameter region.

54. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 53, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the first outside diameter region is about 0.080 to 0.100 inches.

55. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 53, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the second outside diameter region is about 0.043 to 0.080 inches.

56. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 49, wherein the loading tool further comprises a notched region and a third inside diameter region.

57. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 56, wherein the delivery sheath further comprises an outside diameter and an inside diameter.

58. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 57, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the third inside diameter region and the outside diameter of the delivery sheath are substantially equal.

59. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 57, wherein the inside diameter of the loading tool at the second inside diameter region and the inside diameter of the delivery sheath are substantially equal.

60. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 49, further comprising the step of uncoupling the loading tool from the delivery sheath.

61. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 60, wherein the step of uncoupling the loading tool from the delivery sheath results in the filter being appropriately prepared for entry into a blood vessel.

62. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 49, wherein the filter is configured to be disposed within the distal end of the loading tool lumen in an expanded position.

63. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 49, wherein the step of pulling the filter toward the proximal end of the loading tool is performed after the step of coupling the loading tool to the delivery sheath.

64. (Cancelled)